

# BUILDING KNOWLEDGE



## Scattered-Site Supportive Housing SROI Series: Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Kelowna

This series explores the Social Return on Investment (SROI) of operating scattered-site supportive housing in B.C. It features five case studies of scattered-site supportive housing programs located in communities across the province. An SROI ratio compares the total investment to the financial value of the social and economic outcomes achieved, highlighting the value created by investing in these programs.

### Full report

*The Social and Economic Value of Scattered-Site Supportive Housing in B.C.*

### Other case studies

*CMHA Mid-island, Nanaimo*

*Lookout Housing and Health Society, Surrey*

*MPA Society, Vancouver*

*Pacifica Housing, Victoria*

Scattered-site supportive housing programs assist individuals experiencing – or at risk of experiencing – homelessness in transitioning from the streets, shelters or inadequate housing to long-term housing stability in the community. BC Housing supports this type of housing by investing in community-based non-profit agencies that provide programming and rent supplements for market housing. These programs are funded through the Homeless Outreach and Homeless Prevention Programs (HOP and HPP).

CMHA Kelowna offers three streams of scattered-site supportive housing, addressing the unique needs of different community members in Kelowna. These streams include a youth-targeted stream for young people under the age of 24, a stream adhering to a Housing First model for hard to house single adults, and a Community Navigation stream for community members (including families) who struggle to maintain housing.

Through the program, staff work closely with local landlords to lease apartments throughout the city. CMHA Kelowna then sublets the apartments to individuals who are ready to live independently, working in collaboration with the community to ensure that residents have supports to maintain their housing. Rent supplements through BC Housing and federal funding are available to support housing stability and can provide additional support for individuals as they move into housing. CMHA Kelowna has secured approximately 40 units throughout the city for scattered-site supportive housing.

Overall, the average length of stay for CMHA Kelowna scattered-site clients is nearly 15 months, indicating CMHA Kelowna's success in creating stable housing situations for vulnerable individuals.



*For every dollar invested in scattered-site supportive housing through CMHA Kelowna, nearly five dollars in social and economic value is created.*



### This study examines:

- › The social and economic value created by investing in the operation of scattered-site supportive housing
- › The breakdown by stakeholder group of social and economic value that is created
- › Implications for future investment

## The Social Return on Investment (SROI) Methodology

The SROI methodology articulates the financial value of outcomes created through a social investment (such as investment in supportive housing), to reveal how much value is created for every dollar invested. An SROI analysis combines quantitative, qualitative, and participatory research techniques to show the value of outcomes from different stakeholder perspectives. The result is an SROI ratio that compares the total investment to the financial value of the social and economic outcomes that are achieved, showing – in monetary terms – the financial benefit of social investments.

The current research follows the internationally standardized SROI methodology and uses information from existing academic research and grey literature (including other SROI studies and economic analyses), and data gathered from residents, partners, and supportive housing providers.

### KEY ELEMENTS IN THE CMHA KELOWNA SROI MODEL

<b>Inputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Investment by BC Housing (through HOP and HPP) and the federal government (including through the Homelessness Partnering Strategy), in total program costs, including staffing, programming, administration, unit repairs, landlord liaison/housing locator costs, and rent supplements</li> <li>› Rents paid by residents</li> </ul>
<b>Timeframe for Investment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› 2016-2017 operating year</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Housing First residents (male and female single adults) (primary stakeholder)</li> <li>› Youth residents (up to age 24, male and female) (primary stakeholder)</li> <li>› Community Navigation residents (male and female single adults, couples, and families) (primary stakeholder)</li> <li>› Landlords</li> <li>› Local communities</li> <li>› Government systems (various levels)</li> <li>› Investors (federal government via HPS, BC Housing)</li> </ul>
<b>Duration of Outcomes</b>	<p>With an average length of stay of 19 months for individuals housed through the Community Navigation stream, and 12 months for individuals housed through the Youth stream, outcomes are expected to last at least one year without further investment. This means that outcomes are valued for one year without value into the future because, without further investment, residents may not continue to experience program related outcomes and may instead return to homelessness. For individuals housed through the Housing First stream, where the average length of stay is approximately nine months – in part because the program has been operating for only two years – outcomes have been estimated to last a maximum of nine months. We have not speculated about value into the future for these residents, even though some residents may remain housed for one year or longer. In addition, some residents may move on to other independent housing after they leave the program; therefore, the duration of outcomes included in the SROI model are a conservative estimate of the impact of programming.</p>
<b>Approach</b>	<p>The SROI analysis of CMHA Kelowna’s scattered-site supportive housing employs a primarily evaluative approach with some forecasting based on primary and rigorous secondary research.</p>



### Outcomes Included in the SROI Analysis

Outcomes included and valued in the SROI analysis were identified based on existing research, information from CMHA staff and resident interviews. Each outcome was assigned a financial value in the calculation of the SROI ratio. Outcomes include:

Stakeholder	Key Outcomes Included in the SROI
All residents (adults, youth, couples, families)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Increased access to high quality housing and decreased experiences of homelessness</li> <li>› Increased overall wellbeing including positive changes in physical and mental health</li> <li>› Increased safety and decreased experiences of violence</li> <li>› Decreased harm from risk involved with street-based sex work</li> <li>› Decreased harm from substance use and increased ability to move towards reducing use</li> <li>› Increased personal disposable income</li> <li>› Increased ability to stay together as a family (Community Navigation family residents)</li> </ul>
Youth residents	<p><i>Youth experienced the outcomes listed above, as well as these two additional outcomes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Increased peer connections and support</li> <li>› Reconnection with family</li> </ul>
Landlords	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Decreased time and resources managing tenancies (such as evictions, repairs, resident relations)</li> </ul>
Local community/ neighbourhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Improved local neighbourhood and community quality</li> <li>› Increased local economic activity due to resident spending</li> </ul>
Government (all levels)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Decreased use of emergency services by residents such as ambulances and emergency rooms</li> <li>› Decreased use of homeless shelters by residents</li> <li>› Decreased resident involvement in the justice system</li> <li>› Decreased hospital use by residents</li> <li>› Decreased service use related to resident substance use</li> <li>› Decreased child welfare involvement among youth</li> <li>› Decreased risk of sexual exploitation related to homelessness among residents (and associated decreased government service use)</li> </ul>

*“I’m not at a women’s shelter. I’m not looking for housing. I have my life back. My children can visit me now. Friends can come over for dinner.”*

*– CMHA Kelowna Resident*

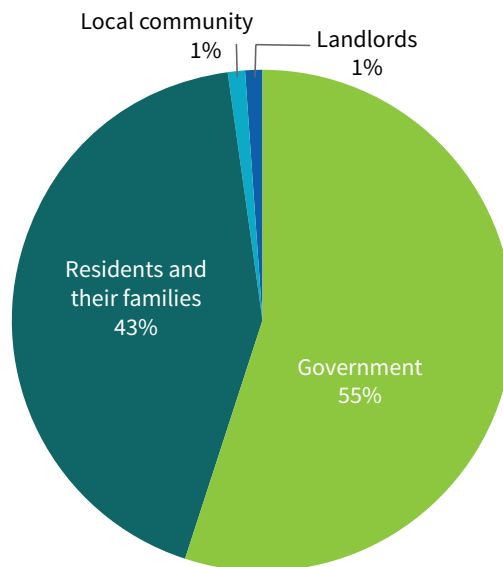


## CMHA Kelowna SROI Results

SROI analysis of investment in CMHA Kelowna’s scattered-site supportive housing revealed:



**For every dollar invested in scattered-site supportive housing through CMHA Kelowna, nearly five dollars in social and economic value is created.**



*Value Breakdown by Stakeholder Group*

All stakeholders included in the SROI analysis experience value from outcomes, including:

**Government:** Approximately 55% of the social and economic value created goes back to the government in cost reallocations related to decreased service use by residents. For every dollar invested, just over two and a half dollars is generated for government in cost reallocations due to decreased service use.

**Local Community:** While the community as a whole benefits from decreased service use that increases efficiency and reduces costs to taxpayers over time, an additional 1% of the value goes back to the local community. This value is generated through improved community quality and local resident spending. The value is experienced by community members who encounter less homelessness in their community, businesses that benefit from local spending, and public institutions like the library that have more actively engaged community members using their services. While some value to the local community was captured through SROI analysis, this value is likely understated because benefits from more efficient delivery of services among community partners and benefits for businesses (beyond local spending) were not fully captured in the SROI model.

**Landlords:** Approximately 1% of the social and economic value is returned to landlords who support program success. Landlords experience value through positive and stable tenancies supported through the program and decreased loss of income and time spent due to rent arrears, repairs or evictions. While some value to landlords was captured in the analysis, this value is likely understated because some benefits, such as the value to landlords of knowing they are contributing to community wellbeing through their program involvement, were not fully captured in the model.

**Residents and their families:** Approximately 43% of the value goes back to residents, through increased wellbeing, safety, and disposable income coupled with reduced harm. This indicates that while scattered-site supportive housing creates important value for the government, it also generates significant value for people living in supportive housing.



### Discussion

With nearly five dollars in social and economic value generated by CMHA Kelowna's scattered-site supportive housing for every dollar invested, it is clear that significant value is created through scattered-site supportive housing for adults, families, and youth who have experienced homelessness or difficulties maintaining housing. CMHA Kelowna's programming creates important added value through its support for families and specialized support for vulnerable youth, who, without supportive housing, are at greater risk of experiencing violence, abuse, and long-term negative outcomes.

The SROI analysis of CMHA Kelowna's scattered-site supportive housing program represents a conservative estimate of the total value created, since it was not possible to measure the financial value of all potential outcomes. Further, many outcomes were not valued into the future, despite the possibility of longer term impacts generated through the life skills and experience of stability gained through housing in community-based market rentals. The actual social and economic value created by CMHA Kelowna's scattered-site supportive housing program is likely much higher.

### Lessons Learned

- › Investment in scattered-site supportive housing creates significant social and economic value, not only for the various levels of government that may experience decreased service use, but also for supportive housing residents, families, landlords and local communities. Further investment in scattered-site supportive housing is expected to generate value while addressing a social need.
- › Investment in increasing the supply of affordable housing can enhance the value of scattered-site supportive housing, which relies on the availability of affordable market rentals for vulnerable individuals.
- › Further research is needed to continue to understand and track the social and economic value created from scattered-site supportive housing.

*"When I was homeless it was a nightmare. Feeling like you're human again is so valuable. I used to carry my bags everywhere, now I can feel like it's safe."*

*– CMHA Kelowna Resident*

### Thank You

*Our sincere thanks to all the residents who shared their perspectives and stories with us. Our sincere appreciation to CMHA Kelowna staff for sharing their valuable insights and for supporting this study.*

### More Information:

Visit BC Housing's Research Centre at [www.bchousing.org](http://www.bchousing.org) to find the latest workshops, research and publications on building and operating affordable, sustainable housing.

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*This study was conducted by SROI experts at Constellation Consulting Group*